

A black silhouette of a detective wearing a fedora and holding a magnifying glass is positioned on the left side of the slide, partially overlapping the title text.

Preparing for the Five-Year Evaluation

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Image Source



Overview

- Timeline & Payment
- Guidelines
- Evaluation Questions
- Evaluation Strategy, Tips, and Terms
- Q&A



Federal Statute Requires the Evaluation

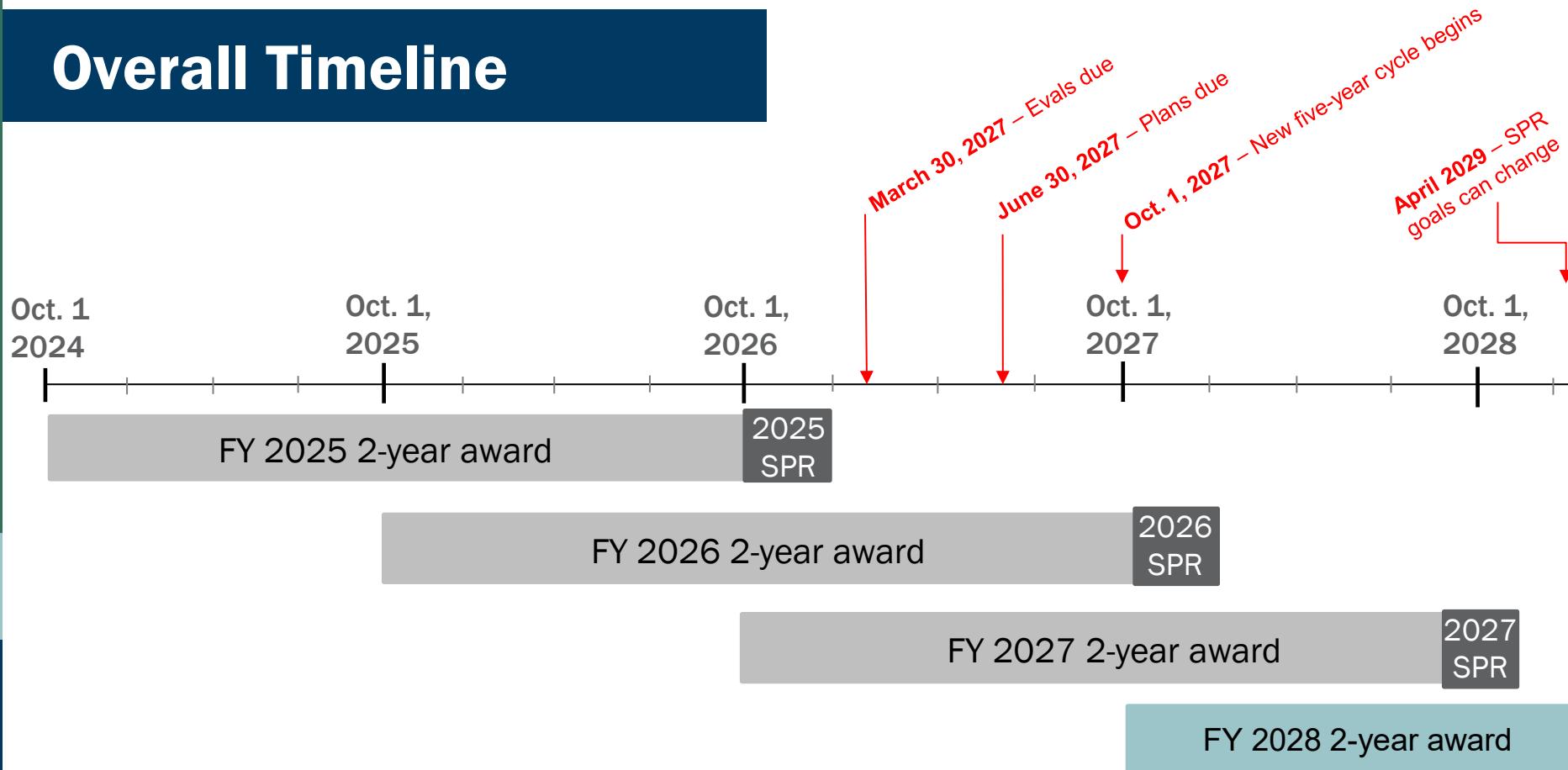
- U.S.C. 20 Sec. 9134 – brief mention of evaluation

(c) Evaluation and report

Each State library administrative agency receiving a grant under this subchapter shall independently evaluate, and report to the Director regarding, the activities assisted under this subchapter, prior to the end of the 5-year plan.

- Note: the SLAA “shall independently evaluate...”
- Because the timeframe is “prior to the end of the 5-year plan,” it sets the 3-year timeframe for the evaluation (2023, 2024, 2025).

Overall Timeline





Paying for the Evaluations/Plans

- Can be either LSTA project funds, administrative funds, or state funds. See: https://imls.gov/sites/default/files/administrativecosts_feb2015.pdf
- Consistency is key: if your evaluation will be funded differently this cycle than in the past, please contact your Program Officer

Five-Year Plan and Five-Year Evaluation

The Five-Year Plan and Five-Year Evaluation are periodic expenses that are statutorily mandated under 20 U.S.C. 9101 *et seq.* While these can be viewed as ordinary administrative costs covered by the 4% restriction, they can also be viewed as extraordinary costs, not usually associated with grants management. As a result, IMLS will accept these projects costs as either part of the 4% administrative costs or as part of the 96% program costs. The determination will be made by the SLAA and **must be handled in a consistent manner**. Whichever approach the State determines will decide how these projects will be reported in the State Program Report (SPR).



Guidelines

Grants to States



2022-2027 Guidelines

- See: [Five-Year Evaluation Guidelines in the G2S Manual](#)
- Specifies:
 - Formatting & page numbers
 - Retrospective questions
 - Process questions
 - Evaluation methodology



Connecting People to Information and Ideas

GUIDELINES FOR IMLS GRANTS TO STATES FIVE-YEAR EVALUATION

Purpose of the Evaluation

Section 9134 (c) of IMLS' authorizing legislation directs State Library Administrative Agencies (SLAAs) to "independently evaluate, and report to the Director regarding, the activities assisted under this subchapter, prior to the end of the 5-year plan." This evaluation provides SLAA an opportunity to measure progress in meeting the goals set in their approved Five-Year Plans with a framework to synthesize information across all state reports in telling a national story.

This guidance identifies a core set of questions for the SLAAs to use in conducting the 2023- 2027 Five-Year Evaluations that:

- Highlight effective past practices;
- Assess the efficacy in implementing the activities used in advancing state goals; and
- Develop key findings and recommendations from evaluating the past five years for use in organizing the next Five-Year Plan.

There are three sets of questions for each SLAA. The guidance contains possible methodological choices to help each SLAA best work with an independent evaluator.

Format and Questions

IMLS analyzes and makes public all SLAA Five-Year Evaluations. In order to do this effectively, certain information needs to be included in all evaluation reports. This is particularly important in enabling IMLS to tell federal policy makers and practitioners about what has happened at a national level. The specified format is intended to ease the burden for any party to review across multiple reports.

Documents **required** for the Five-Year Evaluation include a cover page (1 page), evaluation summary (2-5 pages), evaluation report (25 pages, max.), and appendices. Please follow the format specified below:

Cover Page (1 page)

- State Library Administrative Agency
- Title of the evaluation
- Evaluator(s) name and organizational affiliation
- Date
- Name of the team, branch, unit, or person commissioning the evaluation



Format

- Cover Page (1 page)
- Evaluation Summary (2-5 pages)
- Evaluation Report (25 pages max)
- Appendices (not included in the 25 pages)

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This project was made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

Retrospective Question 1

To what extent did an SLAA Five-Year Plan activities make progress towards each goal?
Describe what key factors contributed to the outcome (e.g., budget, staffing, partners, etc.)

- Organize findings around each goal.
- Categorize goals as either Achieved, Partly Achieved or Not Achieved.

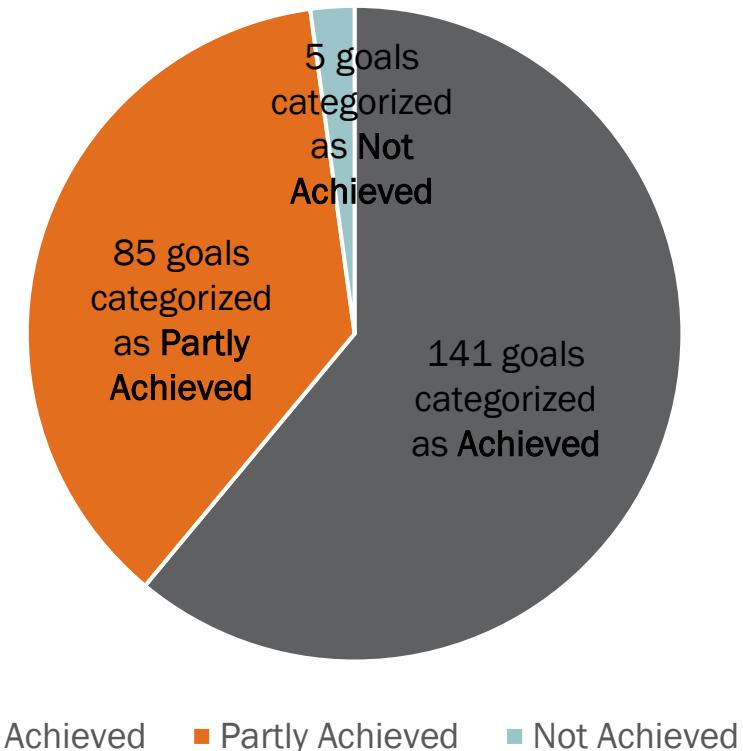
Table 1 - Pennsylvania Department of Education, Office of Commonwealth Libraries' and Evaluators' Assessment of Achievement

GOAL	Pennsylvania Department of Education, Office of Commonwealth Libraries' Internal Assessment	Evaluators' Assessment
GOAL 1: Lifelong Learning and Literacy: Develop and improve services and collaborations with community organizations in all types of libraries for individuals of all ages in order to support their needs for lifelong learning and literacy competencies in areas such as basic, civic and social, digital, financial, health, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.	Partly Achieved	Partly Achieved
GOAL 2: Digital Library Services: Increase and improve Pennsylvanians' access, knowledge, and ability to use and share digital library services, resources, and content.	Partly Achieved	Achieved
GOAL 3: Training and Support: Support and enhance the skills of library staff and leadership, advance the delivery of library services, and improve public libraries' engagement with local community members through continuing education, professional development and the provision of statistical and analytical tools as well as research.	Partly Achieved	Partly Achieved
GOAL 4: Underserved and Populations with Special Needs: Develop and improve services and community organization collaborations in all types of libraries for underserved populations or for Pennsylvanians who have difficulty using libraries, especially those who live in poverty or who have a disability.	Partly Achieved	Partly Achieved
GOAL 5: Workforce Development: Develop and improve workforce development services and community organization collaborations in all types of libraries for individuals of all ages.	Not Achieved	Not Achieved

Last Cycle Data: Goals

- Out of 231 goals across all states, the majority (141 or 61%) were categorized as Achieved
- 18 states categorized all goals as Achieved
- 5 states categorized all goals as Partly Achieved
- 36 states categorized goals with a mix of indicators

Goal Categorization





Judging the Evidence: Achieved/ Partly Achieved/Not Achieved

Possible factors for Partly Achieved/Not Achieved:

- underway but needs more time
- unexpected things that arose
- things that needed to pivot
- things that went great and could be scaled up
- things that could be extended to new audiences
- changing the type of delivery to the same audience
- Etc. [“e.g., staffing, budget, overambitious goals, partners”]



Retrospective Question 2

Question

- To what extent did SLAA Five Year Plan activities achieve results that addressed national priorities associated with Measuring Success focal areas and their corresponding intents?

Focal Areas and Intents

- Lifelong Learning (2 intents)
- Information Access (2 intents)
- Institutional Capacity (3 intents)
- Human Services (3 intents)
- Employment & Economic Development (2 intents)
- Civic Engagement (2 intents)



“Crosswalk” Example from Five-Year Plan

Goal 1: Information Preservation and Access

Need	Focal Area	Project	Intent(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to information and resources• Community connection and collaboration	Information Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Statewide databases• Statewide resource sharing• Government information digitization• Reading Arizona• Arizona Memory Project• Arizona newspapers• Arizona legal resources• State Archives conservation and digitization activities• Increasing access for visually impaired veterans• Talking Book Library discovery and access• Subgrants to public, tribal, school, special and academic libraries for information preservation, digitization, discovery and access• Other programming as identified	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve users' ability to discover information.• Improve users' ability to obtain and/or use information resources.



Retrospective Question 3

Be prepared for this, just in case!

Question

- Did any of the following groups represent a substantial focus for your Five-Year Plan activities?
- For those who answer YES to any of these groups, please discuss what extent each group was reached.
- If there are important groups that did not meet the ten percent threshold or do not appear in the list above, please consider describing these as well.

Groups

- Library workforce (current and future)
- Individuals living below the poverty line
- Ethnic or minority populations
- Immigrants/refugees
- Individuals with disabilities
- Individuals with limited functional literacy of information skills
- Families
- Children (aged 0-5)
- School-aged youth (aged 6-17)



Beneficiaries with a “substantial focus”

“For the purposes of this question, a substantial focus would represent at least ten percent of the total amount of resources committed by the overall plan across multiple years.”

- Includes LSTA and Match
- Covers 2023, 2024, and 2025, cumulatively



Example from Evaluation Summary

A-3. Did any of the following groups represent a substantial focus for your Five-Year Plan activities?

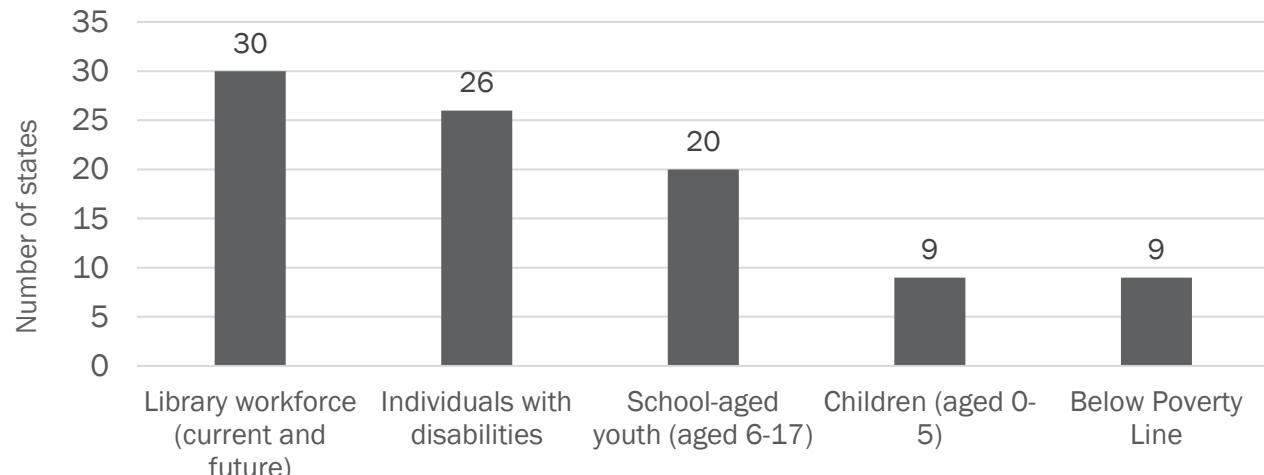
IMLS specifies a 10% threshold on expenditures for identifying substantial focus. The following subgroups met the threshold:

Library workforce (current and future)	Yes
Individuals living below the poverty line	No
Individuals that are unemployed/underemployed	No
Ethnic or minority populations	No
Immigrants/refugees	No
Individuals with disabilities	Yes
Individuals with limited functional literacy or information skills	No
Families	Yes
Children (aged 0-5)	Yes
School-aged youth (aged 6-17)	Yes

Last Cycle Data: Beneficiary Groups

Library Workforce was a “substantial focus” for the highest number of states

Beneficiary Groups as a “Substantial Focus” for States

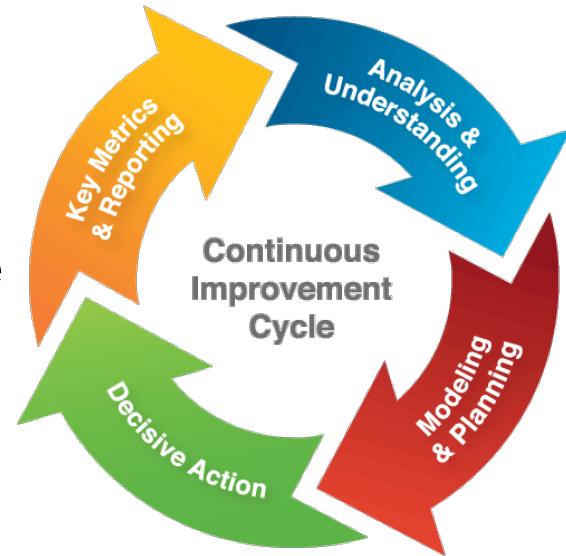


Other beneficiary groups reported, but not included in chart above include:

- Ethnic or minority populations (8 states)
- Families (8 states)
- Individuals with limited functional literacy or information skills (4 states)
- Individuals that are unemployed/underemployed (6 states)
- Immigrants/refugees (2 states)

Process Questions

- How has an SLAA used data from the SPR and elsewhere to guide activities in its Five-Year Plan?
- Specify any changes made at the goal level in the Five-Year Plan and why these occurred?
- How and with whom did an SLAA share data from the SPR and from other evaluation resources?
- How did the last evaluation inform this one? How have you used this information throughout the cycle?





IMLS Review of Evaluations

- Must submit to IMLS by March 30, 2027
- It is normal for us to ask for clarifications or edits
- For evaluations, IMLS “accepts” them, rather than “grading” them
- G2S Program Officers have 90 days (April-June 2027) to finish reviewing all five-year evaluations
- IMLS will send official letters of acceptance

- See examples from last cycle:
<https://www.imls.gov/find-funding/funding-opportunities/grants-to-states/five-year-evaluations>



Evaluation Strategy, Tips, and Terms

Office of Research and Evaluation (ORE)

“Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose.”

– Zora Neale Hurston



Evaluation Goals (1 of 2)

Program Evaluation: Systematic thinking about a program, raising meaningful questions, gathering and assessing evidence to provide answers, and applying all to strengthen a program (Russ-Eft and Preskill, 2009)

1. Comply with 20 U.S.C. § 9134(c) for independently evaluating and reporting of what happened during prior 5-year plan
2. Enable assessments at state/territory level, as well as national level



Evaluation Goals (2 of 2)

3. And, importantly, uncover useful learnings:

- Highlight effective past practices (“Retrospective Questions”)
- Assess processes for implementing grantmaking (“Process Questions”)
- Develop key findings and recommendations from to inform the next Five-Year Plan
- Share out findings, strengthen relationships with key shareholders and other states



Evaluation Terminology

Evaluation Type / Definition	5-Year Evaluation Questions
Impact Evaluation: Evaluation for assessing net results.	“Retrospective Questions”
Process Evaluation: Evaluation for assessing efficacy of implementing program activities and strategies.	“Process Questions”

Evaluation Methodology: A set of qualitative or quantitative research methods used in an evaluation.

Evaluation Shareholders: All people with an interest in the evaluation and its findings, including primary users, program beneficiaries, peers, funders, policy makers, advocates, etc.



Key Evaluation Concerns



Independent Evaluations

IMLS Authorization requires “independent” evaluations.

- Independent evaluations are objective (carried out free from outside influence).
 - Most states have historically used 3rd party evaluators.
- Evaluations can be done in-house if those conducting the evaluations are not directly reporting to those with managerial responsibilities for LSTA-funded services.

Tips – Choosing an Evaluator:

- Balance Independence with Credibility:
 - Evaluator needs the organizational, environmental, and contextual understanding to interpret data and make useful recommendations.
- Consider costs and feasibility; **plan for unexpected challenges and delays.**



Ethical Caveats

- Don't misuse evaluation for pushing a self-interest.
- Maintain objectivity: an answer of NO is as useful as an answer of YES.
- Be prepared to deal with negative findings.

“It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data. Insensibly one begins to twist facts to suit theories, instead of theories to suit facts.”

– Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*

Evaluation Methodology



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Multiple Methods for Data Analysis



Quantitative Analyses

Descriptive statistics (e.g., means, quartiles, distributions)

Inferential statistics



Qualitative Analyses

Coding

“Content analysis”

“Exemplars”



Mixed methods analyses

Combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis



Other Analyses

Case studies

GIS

Social networks

“*Data! Data! Data!*” he cried impatiently. ‘*I can't make bricks without clay.*’”

– Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Adventure of the Copper Beeches*



Multiple Sources of Data for the Evaluation

State Program Report (SPR) data (*NEW: Self-Serve!*)

Other administrative records:

- Strategic and other plans
- Budgets
- Memos
- Legislation, administrative rule changes
- Correspondence

Published evaluations and other studies (e.g., audits)

Media (e.g., newspaper stories, PSAs, etc.)

Interviews and Focus Groups

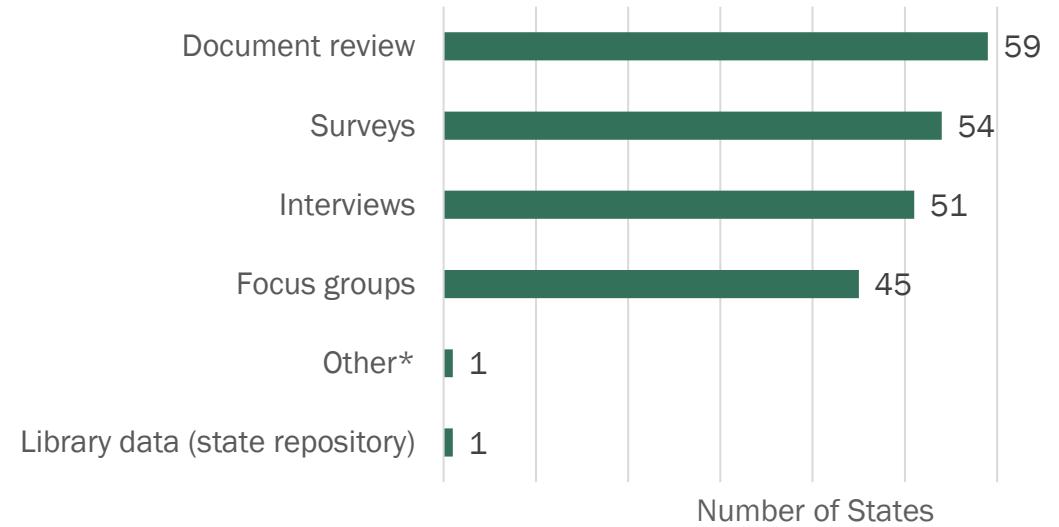
Surveys

Photos/videos

Last Cycle Data: Methods

- All states' evaluators used document review
- Most evaluators used a combination of surveys, interviews, and focus groups

Number of States' Evaluations Reporting Each Method



*Other included:

- Social media, websites, newspaper articles, fliers (5 states used a combination of these);
- Qualitative analysis – one state used *Atlas Ti* of the state's LSTA grants, another used hand-coding of applications and annual reports for FY 2013-2015;
- Project Outcome data (1 state);
- 10 years of Public Libraries Survey (PLS) data (1 state)

Downloading your SPR Data

SPR Data Export

Select Start Year, End Year and Project Status(es) from below options to generate the report. Click the "Generate Reports" button will start the report generation process. This may take a few minute time to complete depending on the number of years selected and starting any other functionality in IMLS SPR application will stop the report generation process.

Options to download files are displayed when the file generation is completed. Click "Download" to download individual file and save to local folders.

Select Start Year: 2022 ▾

Select End Year: 2025 ▾

Select Status(es):

- Draft
- Completed
- Certified
- Approved
- Returned
- Accepted

Generate Reports



Final Tips and Takeaways



Overall

- A good evaluation is independent, rigorous, and produces useful results.
- Buffer the project schedule to anticipate and adapt to the unexpected.
- Prepare for dissemination.



Reminders



ENSURE TO SELECT AN
INDEPENDENT EVALUATOR



(NEW!) YOU HAVE ACCESS TO
YOUR DATA THROUGH THE
SPR



10% THRESHOLD FOR
BENEFICIARY GROUPS –
CALCULATE IT ACROSS THE
ENTIRE 3-YEAR SPAN OF
SPENDING (NOT JUST BY
SINGLE GOAL AREA)



PLAN FOR OTHERS' USE
BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER
THE EVALUATION

Poll

Do you want IMLS to hold a
Community of Practice for
evaluators?

Questions?

Break

4:00 – 4:15 PM (Eastern Time)